



## **MINUTES**

### **BOARD OF EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSIONERS**

#### **LISTENING SESSION**

**July 18, 2018 at 5:30pm**

**Journey House, 2110 W. Scott Street, Milwaukee WI 53204**

#### **Present:**

Commissioner Chez Ordonez, Vice-Chair

Commissioner Tony Snell

Commissioner Mayhoua Moua

Commissioner Sheila Ashley

Commissioner Martha Collins

Commissioner Jennifer Bennett

Commissioner Reggie Jackson

Commissioner Nathan Guequierre

Sharon Robinson, Dept. of Administration

Jessica Langill, Dept. of Administration

Patricia Ruiz-Cantu, Dept. Of Administration

Rebecca Rabatin, ADA Coordinator, Dept. of Administration

Ben Roovers, City Attorney's Office

James Hannig, Dept. of Public Works

Michael Amsden, Dept. of Public Works

Mayra Alaniz, Milwaukee Mayor's Office

Deb Falk-Palec, Chair of MKE County Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The meeting was called to order at 5:38 p.m. by Commissioner Ordonez

#### ***1. Approval of Minutes from June 20, 2018 Meeting***

Commissioner Ashley moved to approve the minutes, Commissioner Jackson seconded. No objections.

#### ***2. Accessible Bike Update (James Hannig)***

James Hannig, DPW Pedestrian and Bicycle Coordinator, gave background on the adaptive bike workgroup. He stated that DPW put the workgroup together as a

commitment to the ERC in response to their concern with the lack of accessible bikes for persons with disabilities. The workgroup has been meeting every 3 weeks as of April 24<sup>th</sup>. Hannig shared that the city is moving forward with a dockless bike share study which is not necessarily related to the adaptive bike issue. He stated that there were over 1000 responses to the accessible bike survey. The survey was meant to provide the workgroup with feedback on the obstacles people face in relation to bike share. Hannig stated there are 3 models of pilot programs that are being considered; staffed, station-based/dockless, or a mixture. Hannig stated that the workgroup is on course to procuring bicycles and looking for an operator by the end of August. Hannig stated that the meetings have been very productive but that there is still a lot of work to be done on choosing the model of the pilot program and who the operator will be.

Commissioner Snell asked if there are results from the community survey. Jessica Langill stated that the Commissioners have been emailed the results of the survey. Commissioner Snell asked if Hannig thought the results from the community survey would push the workgroup in any certain direction. Hannig stated that the study focused more on barriers to access and that it showed there are concerns about safety. He stated generally people favored station-based or staffed models. Commissioner Ashley asked if the meetings have been attended by the constituents who made the initial complaint and if they were satisfied by what the workgroup has done so far. Hannig stated that they all have been invited and have been represented at several meetings. He stated that DPW has been fostering an environment where they can give feedback.

Commissioner Ordonez asked if DPW is still on track to meet the date goals listed in the original commitment letter. Hannig stated that DPW could procure accessible/adaptive bikes now but that they are waiting to make sure that is what the workgroup would want. He also stated that DPW does not have operating funding, so it may be difficult to have a full pilot program running by the end of 2018. Commissioner Ordonez asked what the holdup was for operating funds. Hannig stated that there are not operating funds available from DPW but that they are looking into other funding options. Commissioner Ordonez asked why the 2 million dollar federal grant cannot be used for operating costs. Hannig stated that no funds from the grant can be used for operating funds, only for procuring equipment. Commissioner Ordonez asked if there is a rough estimate of how much operating costs would be. Hannig stated that they did not know that cost yet, but that they could request quotes from vendors/operators.

Deb Falk-Palec, stated that James Hannig and Rebecca Rabatin have been responsive and helpful. She brought up the concern from the ERC regarding vendors being a part of the workgroup, and mentioned that all vendors may not have been invited to past meetings. She brought up the Public Works Committee meeting and stated the disability community was silenced and not allowed to give any public testimony regarding dockless bike share. She stated the ordinance was approved without public

comment and that it excludes all people who need to use a hand-cycle. She stated the workgroup would like to receive information and updates before the meetings. Falk-Palec stated one of their main concerns is that the city is using people with disabilities to incentivize operators bringing in accessible/adaptive bikes. She stated the ordinance states that if an operator has 10% accessible/adaptive bikes, they can increase their fleet over vendors who cannot provide accessible/adaptive bikes. She stated all vendors should have to provide accessible/adaptive bikes. Falk-Palec also brought up the concern that there may be no vendors that can provide 10% accessible/adaptive bikes. She also brought up a concern with a bike-shop or staffed bike share model, stating that it would be more of a “separate but equal” program since accessible/adaptive bikes could not be available at all times.

Commissioner Ordonez stated the ERC has not been supportive of a bike-shop model because it does not provide equal access to all. He asked Falk-Palec what their ask would be regarding the pilot program. He asked her to provide the ERC with a written statement on what they would see fit. Commissioner Ashley asked DPW to speak to why public comment was not taken at today’s meeting. Mike Amsden, Multi-Modal Transportation Manager for DPW, stated that Chairman Bauman made the decision to not allow public comment. Amsden stated the ordinance passed today prohibits anyone from bringing dockless bikes into the city. A resolution was also passed directing DPW to develop a pilot study on dockless bikes. The study has not been decided upon as of yet. He also stated that the dockless bike share pilot study is a separate issue from the adaptive/accessible bike pilot program. He stated that to his knowledge there are no existing bikeshare programs anywhere in the country that also offer adaptive/accessible bikes within the program, which is why DPW decided to incentivize having adaptive/accessible bikes.

### ***3. Strategic Planning Update (Sharon Robinson)***

Commissioner Mayhoua motioned to table discussion for next meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Jackson. No objections. Tabled for September meeting.

### ***4. Nomination and Election of Chair and Co-Chair (tabled at June meeting)***

Commissioner Snell moved to table discussion to September meeting. Commissioner Ashley seconded. No objections. Tabled for September meeting.

### ***5. Hours Against Hate and IAOHRA Discussion (Commissioner Tony Snell)***

Commissioner Snell asked to move this agenda item to the end of the meeting, time permitting.

(end of meeting) Commissioner Snell talked about Milwaukee Brewer's player Josh Hader who recently had tweets resurface that degraded women, black people, and the LGBT community. Commissioner Snell read his statement regarding this situation.

Commissioner Snell moved to adopt this statement as an official statement from the ERC. Commissioner Ashley seconded. No objection. Statement approved as an official statement from the ERC.

## **6. Listening Session**

### **a) ERC Description (Commissioner Ordonez) and Commissioner Introductions**

All present Commissioners introduced themselves. Commissioner Ordonez gave a quick description of the Equal Rights Commission (ERC). He stated the ERC recently revamped the ordinance to make it stronger and increase inclusions, but also for communities to have a place to voice their concerns and have open dialogue. He stated the ERC can also influence public policy and to advocate for all communities. He also introduced Jessica Langill, Ben Roovers, and Sharon Robinson.

### **b) Community Listening Session (Ian Bautista, Clarke Square Neighborhood Initiative)**

Ian Bautista stated he would moderate the night's discussion and invite attendees to speak on their migration stories to Milwaukee.

A representative from Voces de la Frontera read a statement from the organization. The statement said: Voces is the largest membership-based Latinx organization in Wisconsin. Immigrant community members make the community better and Milwaukee would have been much smaller if people had not immigrated to Milwaukee. Voces recommends that the (1) City of Milwaukee Police Department should update their Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to state that Police Officers should never ask for status or cooperate with ICE to detain and deport. (2) Milwaukee should set aside public funding to provide access to an attorney for those targeted by ICE. (3) Milwaukee leaders should urge County Sheriff Schmidt to stop cooperating with ICE and separating Milwaukee families. She also stated that she has been working with immigrant families for the past 25 years. Some of the things she sees is the trauma being caused to the children and families when community members are deported. She also asked the Commission to get to know immigrant families and to not listen to the negative stigma from the media.

Patricia Ruiz-Cantu, Community Outreach Manager-Dept. of Administration, stated that her family migrated to Milwaukee in the 90s. She stated that it is difficult to migrate to a new place and learn about new cultures. She said that immigrants experience great culture-shock and dynamics are very different. Ruiz-Cantu stated that we are all immigrants. She mentioned that everyone that has an accent or a different skin-tone is not illegal. She encouraged the Commission and attendees to meet people and get to know families to break the stigma and fear.

Ian Bautista shared that even though he was born in the United States that he has faced discrimination and assumptions. He stated he has lived in Milwaukee since 2006 and that Clarke Square has always been welcoming to immigrants.

Commissioner Snell stated his mother and husband are immigrants. He stated that since he spoke Spanish as a young person that he too faced discrimination and assumptions. He talked about the emotional trauma that children in Milwaukee face as they worry about their parents being deported. He stated that the ERC is here to make sure that quality of life is a right given to everyone.

Director Sharon Robinson asked for a wish list from attendees. She stated that the Dept. of Administration makes large budget decisions and that it would be helpful to know what types of budget priorities the city should have to make immigrant lives better. Ian Bautista reminded attendees that they did not need to give their name when they testify if they did not feel comfortable doing so.

An attendee asked what happened to all of the city money that used to go toward after school programs. Director Sharon Robinson stated there are still quite a few dollars that go toward after school programs. She brought up Beyond the Bell, which is a city-wide mission that connects more kids to after school programming. She also mentioned that if anyone in attendance was interested in after school programs that they give her their contact information. Director Robinson stated that a recent survey showed that many families with children did not know about the wealth of after school programs available in Milwaukee. She stated that this year the city launched Milwaukee Mentors with MPS and the Milwaukee Bucks which makes sure every student has access to a mentor if they want one. Ian Bautista reiterated that a priority for the community is after school programming for their young people.

An attendee also stated that the city needs to be invested in making sure that all city parks are of quality in all neighborhoods. Rebecca Rabatin, City of Milwaukee, stated that DPW has a program called MKE Plays which is working on evaluating parks around the city. She stated that there is funding available to improve parks around the city and will be working with community

organizations on improving the parks most in need. She suggested that concerned residents should contact their Alderman to state what parks should be considered for MKE Plays. Ian Bautista suggested that people contact their County Supervisor as well regarding county parks. Commissioner Ordonez stated the ERC can connect with the County Human Rights Commission to address needs like parks, potholes, and city services. He stated that the immigrant community needs to report issues and also complain if proper translation services are not available. He stated the ERC wants to understand the barriers immigration families are facing.

Mayra Alaniz, City of Milwaukee, stated she is the daughter of two immigrants and that she was born in Milwaukee, but grew up in Mexico and then was brought back to the US at the age of 6. She stated that her parents had a positive experience migrating to Milwaukee and that it embodied "the American dream." She stated that when she moved back to Milwaukee the schools did not offer language classes that would have helped her more easily retain her Native tongue. She stated that as a city employee she has found out that there are very few translators in all city departments. She stated she questions why the city does not have an employee that speaks each of the main languages and thinks city departments should have access to translators. Alaniz stated that she feels the city has a very diverse workforce and that she feels she can be open about who she is. She acknowledged all of the great programs and investments the city has but stated that the city needs to translate all communications and do more with door-to-door outreach to non-English speaking communities.

Commissioner Moua shared she came to US as a refugee at 7 years old and had to be the interpreter for her parents. She stated she has been living in Milwaukee for 28 years and that while Milwaukee is welcoming to immigrants and refugees, it is not doing as much for their non-English speaking residents as other big cities. She stated city resources are not always shared with non-English speaking residents and that immigrant communities are not always benefiting from all city programs. Commissioner Ordonez stated that it is so important that the city makes external partnerships with quality interpreters.

An attendee stated that it is not so much about the policies that are made, but more about the implementation and follow up of the policies. He stated that the city needs to make sure that the frontline people that work within the communities understand the policies and procedures. He also stated that the city leaders need to speak up when negative things happen outside of the city and that leaders need to be speaking for the full community. He stated that in the past year and a half, people have been looking at him differently and social media has made life worse for immigrant communities. He stated that working conditions are poor for many immigrants in Milwaukee, and they only keep their jobs because they need money to support their families. He brought up

Milwaukee's many ethnic festivals and stated that was a great thing for communities, but that there needs to be more partnership between communities.

Commissioner Jackson stated he has studied the history of immigrants in the US. He said the current struggles and policies that perpetuate anti-immigrant sentiments is not new and that the US has seen this type of discrimination before. He stated that when there are struggles that residents continue to fight to change bad policy and replace them with good policies. He stated that American has a "diversion to diversity" and has made potential policies that discriminate against immigrants and diverse communities. Commissioner Jackson talked about various laws and policies throughout history that have been discriminatory to all types of immigrant and refugee groups. He stated that if you are not part of the structure to change things by speaking your mind, then other people will make the decisions for us. He stated it is important for Milwaukeeans to stand up for immigrant and refugee communities and that diverse communities need to stick together.

Rebecca Rabatin, ADA Coordinator for the City of Milwaukee, stated that she has trained City of Milwaukee employees on the American Disabilities Act. She stated that she trains employees on what a "qualified" interpreter looks like including needing to be proficient in legal, medical, and technical terminology. Rabatin stated that it is also very important that the city gets qualified interpreters for each department. She shared that she is second-generation American and that she was used to hearing accents growing up and that she was lucky enough to grow up with people from many different backgrounds. Rabatin stated she is highly offended with the current culture in the US. She stated that some of her nieces that visit the US from other countries are fearful for their safety.

A community member asked how often there are community meetings and listening sessions. She also stated that many immigrant communities lack financial knowledge and expertise. She suggested the city offer financial classes to immigrant communities. She also stated that it can be hard for families to get translation services in the hospitals. Commissioner Ordonez stated the ERC meets the third Wednesday of each month. He stated these meetings are open to anyone and that public comment is allowed at each meeting. Commissioner Ordonez stated the ERC tries to do a listening session once a quarter.

Ian Bautista thanked everyone for sharing their stories and suggestions. He urged the ERC to make a recommendation to the city to become a sanctuary city. He also stated that there are several city programs and resources that are not available to all residents because they do not have a valid social security number. He asked the ERC to recommend that the city of Milwaukee make all housing

incentive programs available to everyone, regardless of their immigration status or social security number.

**c) Follow-up Questions/Remarks from Commission**

Commissioner Ordonez stated that all recommendations have been heard and the ERC will work to act on them. He stated the ERC openly condemns the actions of ICE and that it will work to be an influencer to the Milwaukee Common Council. He stated this listening session has helped the ERC understand what the community needs are. He thanked everyone for attending the listening session. He reminded everyone that they have a voice and an impact.

***7. Next Meeting Date: August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 @ 2:30pm, City Hall***

***8. Adjourn***

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

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